A safety committee serves in many valuable capacities. Its main purpose is to create and maintain employees’ active and positive interest in safety. It provides a forum to discuss relevant safety issues and is action-oriented.

The committee should be involved with reviewing accident investigation reports, conducting inspections and determining/facilitating safety training needs.

The committee is usually made up of representatives from the various district departments, as well as management and employees. The committee also needs to have the authority to make decisions or have a direct line of communication with the district decision makers.

To enable communication between the committee and employees, minutes should be taken and published. A means of communicating concerns to the safety committee should also be established.

Forming a safety committee early in the development of a safety process can help speed the process since committee members can provide valuable input and do some of the work.

Specific safety committee duties might include:

- Review current accident history and accident investigation reports. In doing so, the committee will serve to ensure adequate investigations are being conducted and may, if appropriate, submit additional recommendations to management.
- Review results of supervisor safety inspections to gauge the effectiveness of accident prevention efforts. In addition, members of the safety committee will conduct independent inspections of selected areas on a regular basis and follow up on recommendations.
- Review employee safety suggestions and investigate reports for hazardous conditions. Conditions identified as imminently hazardous will be investigated by the Safety Coordinator, independently of the safety committee. Where appropriate, recommendations will be made to management for implementation of suggestions or correction of hazards.
- Develop safety programs as loss experience dictates the need.
- Identify safety training needs and facilitate the training.

Suggested functions of a safety committee:

- Establish charter, mission statement or similar documents that identify the safety committee’s goals and objectives. Should be signed by the senior manager.
- Establish and monitor company safety policy.
- Encourage and provide opportunity for employee input and feedback to ideas, problems and solutions for safety issues.
- Provide positive reinforcement of safety policies and maintain a positive attitude toward safety.
- Identify unsafe work practices and conditions and recommend corrective action.
- Review accident/incident investigations and evaluate recommended corrective action.
- Provide compliance assistance with state, federal and corporate safety regulations.
- Develop and support safety and health training needs.
- Assess safety equipment needs and evaluate training needs of new equipment.
- Disseminate and promote safety information.
- Establish a regular meeting schedule and document meeting minutes.
- Conduct safety and housekeeping inspections.
An effective safety committee depends on:

**Sincerity and Interest**

Both management and employee members must be sincere, cooperative, and intent on the mission of maintaining safe workplace conditions and practices. Passive inactive members are a detriment to the committee and if they cannot be inspired, the committee activities would be improved by their replacement. Typically, some type of employee rotation for committee members is suggested.

**Adhering to Schedules of Meetings and Inspections**

If meetings are skipped, it may indicate that they are not perceived as important or that there is not sufficient business for a productive meeting or safety committee activity. If meetings or committee activities seem to be unnecessary, it may be that the committee organization needs revision.

**Action on Recommendations and Suggestions**

Maintaining interest and support of employees requires that immediate consideration and action is taken on suggestions. Safety committee should have the authority to make improvements. Committee activities and accomplishments should be communicated to other affected employees.

**Records of Injuries and Rates**

A current record should be maintained of all injuries, injury trends and frequency rates to facilitate discussion and/or actions necessary to address accident causes. Resources should be focused in areas needing the greatest attention.

**Recognition of Accomplishments**

The safety committee, as well as employees, should be advised of the status of the safety program, and recognized for their contribution to achieving safety goals and objectives.

**Barriers to committee effectiveness:**

- When safety and health is not a top management priority.
- A lack of expertise or complete information.
- A lack of discretionary budget for committee activities.
- A lack of training for committee members.
- Infrequent meetings or meetings without a schedule or agenda.
- A lack of formal and complete committee meeting minutes.
- Not using committee meeting minutes to monitor progress.
- Canceling meetings without a critical reason.